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FIERCELY INDEPENDENT

Vigilante Nation

Canada calls on citizen spies

Creative writing
contest winners!

Canada and Israel:
United they fall

Attawapiskat, revisited

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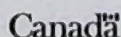
About Us

Briarpatch publishes six thought-provoking, fire-breathing, riot-inciting issues a year. Fiercely independent and frequently irreverent, *Briarpatch* delves into today's most pressing challenges from a radical, grassroots perspective, aiming always to challenge, inspire and empower its readers.

Opinions expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the *Briarpatch* board or staff. *Briarpatch* is a member of Magazines Canada and the staff are members of RWDSU Local 568. In order to find new subscribers, we occasionally exchange mailing lists with like-minded organizations for one-time mailings. If you prefer not to receive such mailings, please write to us at the above address.

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briarpatch

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a fond farewell

It was a brisk sunny day in November 2007 when I first bounded up the stairs at Huston House, the historic building in which *Briarpatch* makes its home, brimming with energy and ideas. Four and a half years later, I am brimming instead with the many skills and experiences that *Briarpatch* has given me: a deep knowledge of even the most mundane aspects of non-profit administration, a keen eye for comma splices, an unhealthy capacity to juggle many tasks at once, a far more cynical sense of humour, and a penchant for punchy puns and alliterations, to name a few.

By far the most valuable gift that *Briarpatch* has bestowed is the vibrant and dynamic community of readers, donors, volunteers, board members, and staff who sustain and vitalize the magazine. This engaged community of people who are willing to give their time, dollars, privilege, and egos over to the pursuit of truth and justice, who seek out voices and perspectives that are difficult to find, and who listen attentively to ideas that are difficult to hear, are a wellspring of inspiration. To everyone in the *Briarpatch* community, I offer my most sincere thanks.

My work at *Briarpatch* – first as publisher, later as editor of *Briarpatch's* altogether-too-short-lived sister publica-

tion *The Sasquatch*, and finally as *Briarpatch's* co-editor/publisher – has fed me in all kinds of ways. But if *Briarpatch* has taught me anything it's the importance of openness to change. As I move toward other projects that allow me to nurture my creativity in different ways, I am pleased to be handing the job over to someone else with a vibrant creative spirit that will no doubt find nourishment in the rich soils of the 'patch.

Rebecca Granovsky-Larsen comes equipped with 15 years of experience in wide-ranging independent media, from CKDU FM community radio in Halifax to *Entremundos Magazine* in Guatemala City. She is the former editor-in-chief of the award-winning *Ryerson Free Press*, and fresh out of a master's degree in environmental studies from York University. From labour organizing to Indigenous solidarity and environmental justice activism, Rebecca is a long-time community organizer and all-around revolutionary gal. Undeniably enthusiastic, she will be a valuable addition to the *Briarpatch* community. I wish her at least as much growth as *Briarpatch* has offered me.

With so much gratitude to all of you,

SHAYNA STOCK, OUTGOING EDITOR/PUBLISHER
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on stories

As renowned storyteller Eduardo Galeano writes, "We are not condemned to accept the future. We may invent it." Storytelling helps us do so. Stories enable us to make meaning of the world around us; they provide us with a means to understand what is, but also to imagine what might be. They house our collective memories, transmit our knowledge, and remind us of what we hold dear. Stories also shelter our hopes for the future, and permit us to animate visions of social transformation beyond abstract principles.

Just as we create stories, they in turn create us. As author Eric Selbin explains, "People choose to resist and rebel and people make revolutions. They do this in no small measure by making stories, stories that also make them people."

In the spirit of fostering the vital role of storytelling in social movements, *Briarpatch* launched its first annual creative writing contest last fall, "Writing in the Margins,"

calling for bold and courageous writing that pushes the boundaries between fact and fiction, between journalism and prose, and that brings to life issues of political, social, and environmental justice in original and inventive ways. We would like to thank the 51 dauntless writers who responded to this call. Thanks are also due to Lee Maracle, the esteemed writer, educator, activist, and storyteller who assumed the difficult task of determining the winning entries.

Our heartfelt congratulations to Leanne Simpson and Russell Samuel Myers Ross, whose stories took the prizes for best short fiction and creative non-fiction, respectively, and are published in the pages that follow. Honourable mentions are extended to Violet Gartner and Cynthia Dewi Oka, whose entries can be found at briarpatchmagazine.com.

VALERIE ZINK, EDITOR/PUBLISHER
valerie@briarpatchmagazine.com

Fathima Cader is a writer, photographer, and law grad.

Christian Chapman is an Ojibwe artist from Fort William First Nation.

Chris Foster is a Halifax-based artist working in print, illustration, and installation. He graduated from NSCAD in 2008 with an interdisciplinary BFA. His work can be found at www.chrisfoster.ca.

Daniel Hertzberg grew up on Long Island in Bellmore, NY, and later went to school at the Rhode Island School of Design. He currently resides in Montclair, NJ, and makes weekly trips to play hockey at Chelsea Piers in New York City.

Megan Hope is a health-care worker interested in social justice. She has been active in the campaign to stop Toronto Mayor Rob Ford's cutbacks of social services, and is a member of the Davenport-Perth Stop the Cuts Committee.

Mike Krebs is a Vancouver-based Indigenous activist of Blackfoot and European descent. He is currently involved with the Boycott Israeli Apartheid Campaign in Vancouver.

Shantala Robinson is an illustrator and designer based in Vancouver. Her illustrations blend traditional artistic elements from many different cultures.

Shira Ronn works in a copy centre, but otherwise enjoys making prints (and looking into the odds and ends of people's lives). She is working on getting over a complicated history with graphic design and other first-world problems.

Russell Samuel Myers Ross belongs to the Tsilhqot'in Nation. He holds a master's in Indigenous governance from the University of Victoria, and is now a sessional instructor at Thompson Rivers University in Williams Lake.

Leanne Simpson is of Mississauga Nishnaabeg ancestry and is the author of *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence*.

Amanda Strong is a Toronto-based artist and filmmaker. She is a passionate, expressive individual who embraces emotion and experience. Amanda has exhibited her work in the Ishkwaday Art Show and the Contact Photography Exhibit in Toronto, and recently had her first film premiere at imagineNATIVE.

Vernon Wilson is a Gitksan First Nations person from the village of Kispiox, located in northwestern B.C. He holds an associate of arts degree from Thompson Rivers University and a creative writing diploma from the Surrey Writers' School.



Hope



Myers Ross



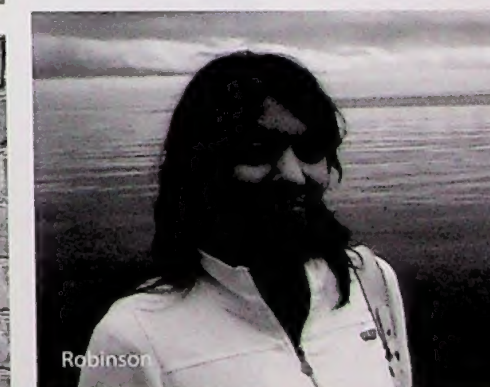
Ronn



Foster



Simpson



Robinson



Cader



CHRISTIAN CHAPMAN

Sabe

By Leanne Simpson

The house had a makeshift feeling she should have grown out of a long time ago, her scattered belongings littering the floor like residue. She liked to feel as though she could leave at any moment just by throwing a few things into a bag. The truth was it would take her as long as anyone else to pack up and move, but the makeshift feeling made her feel one step closer to escaping – the walls, the house, the city – and she liked that.

Ester's home, her real home, was among the black spruce. She missed the Labrador tea that edged the mossy bogs, the night sky that danced. Like many people from the bush, work had led her to the city, and, like those same people from the bush, she wasn't motivated by money, only by responsibility.

The phone rang, and she stumbled to find it, tripping over toys and clothes heaped on the floor. Remembering simpler times when receivers were attached to walls, she answered.

"Hello?"

"Aanii Ester! Niin Clarence."

Clarence was taking language classes at the band office and never missed an opportunity to practice his rudimentary Anishinaabemowin.

"Hi, Clarence."

"Aaniish na my beautiful sister?"

"I'm fine, Clarence. What's up?"

Clarence launched into his news report from home, rhyming off fact-based stories in his best radio announcer voice like she wasn't on the other end of the phone. She half listened while she dressed.

"... and Nosh and Wilma have called it quits. Wilma's mom's got the kids until she gets back on her feet again ..." His voiced trailed off, waiting for some sort of acknowledgement from Ester. Ester wasn't listening, but Clarence was undeterred. She only ever listened for one thing, and since sightings would have made the lead story, she felt

safe in assuming there had been none. Another week with no detection.

"Holaaa Clarence. That's a lot of stuff for one week," she said.

"No kidding, sis. I don't miss a thing."

"But I gotta go. I'm going out tonight. The sitter is already here."

"You? Going out? Holaaa, hot date or what?"

"Just an old friend coming through town, no big deal."

"K then. I'll keep you posted."

"K. Bye."

Ester gave the sitter her number, hugged the kids, and walked out into the cool summer air wearing an army jacket, a black T-shirt, and jeans. She rarely left those kids, protecting them like mama bears protect their cubs.

She walked down the front step feeling too exhausted to be leaving the house, much less meeting her friend, but she knew that staying in wouldn't answer her questions. Plus, this was her only chance to see him. His band was only in town tonight, and then he'd be gone again for goodness knows how long. It was now or potentially never.

He wasn't actually a friend – not yet, anyway. She'd never met him in person. His day job was as an editor for a left-leaning arts and culture weekly in a city too small to appreciate it. She was a contributing editor. He only knew her through her writing. She knew him through editorial comments and the album his indie band had released. But she knew him well enough that her suspicions had been aroused, first, from his gentleness and, second, from his honesty. He framed everything in the good, so gentle with whatever changes he thought she should maybe make. His quiet stillness endured even when her piece was a mess, hours before the deadline. But she had to be sure.

She walked the three blocks to the bar where he was playing. There was no lineup to get in, which was a relief

because waiting in a line at this point in her life would have seemed like a failure. She told the bouncer she was on the list. He looked surprised but found her name and let her in. She headed straight for the bar to get a pint, in hopes that it would both warm her up and calm her down. He found her.

"Hey. Are you Ester?" he said softly.

"Oh, hey. Hi. Nice to meet you in person," she said, shaking his hand.

"Yeah, yeah. Nice to finally meet you in person."

"Totally."

"Maybe we can hang out a bit after the gig. I know I'll be late ..."

"That sounds wonderful."

"OK. Wait for me."

"I'll wait."

She got another beer from the bar, waited for the opening act to finish and for the stage to be reset. A half-hour later, he appeared on stage, guitar in hand. From the opening song, he seemed to focus directly on her. She tried to remember the last time she'd even been at a live music venue. Maybe the lights made everyone think the band was singing directly to them. Maybe the performers couldn't even see the audience. Maybe they could.

Although he appeared to be in his late thirties, he'd been on Earth for much longer than that. In the old days, when only the Anishnaabeg were here, he had a different name, a gentler, kinder name. He lived among them, but he rarely revealed himself. His job in those days was like his job now; he looked after people who had gotten lost, both physically and metaphorically. His inner nature was so sweet and gentle. His fur so soft. His strength so quiet. He walked with the Anishnaabeg to teach them about both sides of honesty: the power of being forthcoming with another being *and* the art of cherishing another's most naked truth.

Now things were different. Sasquatch. Bigfoot. Yeti. Sightings, like he was a UFO.

She waited for him after he'd finished playing. Past last call, past the crowd of fans surrounding him as he tried to make it to the bar to get the last two of his free beers. The roadies started packing. The rest of the band headed for the bus to relax and get high. He patiently spoke to every fan, thanking each one of them with a mixture of humility, genuine surprise, and embarrassment that only growing up in Manitoba can instill in a person for the rest of their lives. Then he quietly sat down on the bar stool next to hers.

"Hey."

"Hey," she responded, meeting his eyes and then dropping hers to the floor.

"Thanks for coming. Sorry it was an off night for us."

"It was lovely," she answered. "Lovely."

"Ah, thanks, thank you. That's really nice. I'm still sorry. I dunno what happened."

What happened next was the kind of rare thing that happens only when certainty melts fear into nothingness. Their eyes met and no one looked away. Relief and breath poured into the space between their bodies. She pulled his body into hers, into an embrace of complete knowing, of profound acceptance. He let go of everything that he had to carry and fell into her arms. He had recognized her immediately.

Although she appeared to be in her late thirties, she'd been on Earth for much longer than that. In the old days, when only the Nishnaabeg were here, she had a different name, a gentler, kinder name. She lived among them, but she rarely revealed herself. Her job in those days was like her job now; she looked after people who had gotten lost, both physically and metaphorically. Her inner nature was so sweet and gentle. Her fur so soft. Her strength so quiet. She walked with the Nishnaabeg to teach them about both sides of honesty: the power of being forthcoming with another being *and* the art of cherishing another's most naked truth.

Now things were different. Sasquatch. Bigfoot. Yeti. Sightings, like she was a UFO.

They sat together, each unable to see themselves fully, but basking in the power of the other. They talked. About how hard it had become, and about how easy it had been in the coniferous trees of the North compared to the concrete of the cities, back when they didn't even know it was easy. They talked about the loneliness of their lives, so commonplace now that each hardly noticed. They talked about the last time they had run into one of their own.

When they finished their beer, he asked if she would walk with him. They left the bar and headed west toward the river, the one that bubbles like a beating heart. They walked beside each other, feeling the energy of the other resonating, but being careful not to touch or brush arms. Why, neither of them was sure. When they got to the river, he put his arm around her and gently circled her forehead with his finger as if to mark her with his affection. A tear fell from her eye, hitting the ground like a heartbeat. He told her 10,000 years of everything. They held each other.

The light of their Nokomis rose and then cascaded onto the water spreading out before them. She bathed them in her warmth and watched over them as they kissed, as their love echoed out from the riverbank in concentric circles. A nighthawk flew over the water, diving suddenly and dramatically toward the ground. With intensity and without hesitation, two metres from the water and at the bottom of his dive, he flexed his wings upward. Air rushed through her wing tips, making a thunderous sound. **B**

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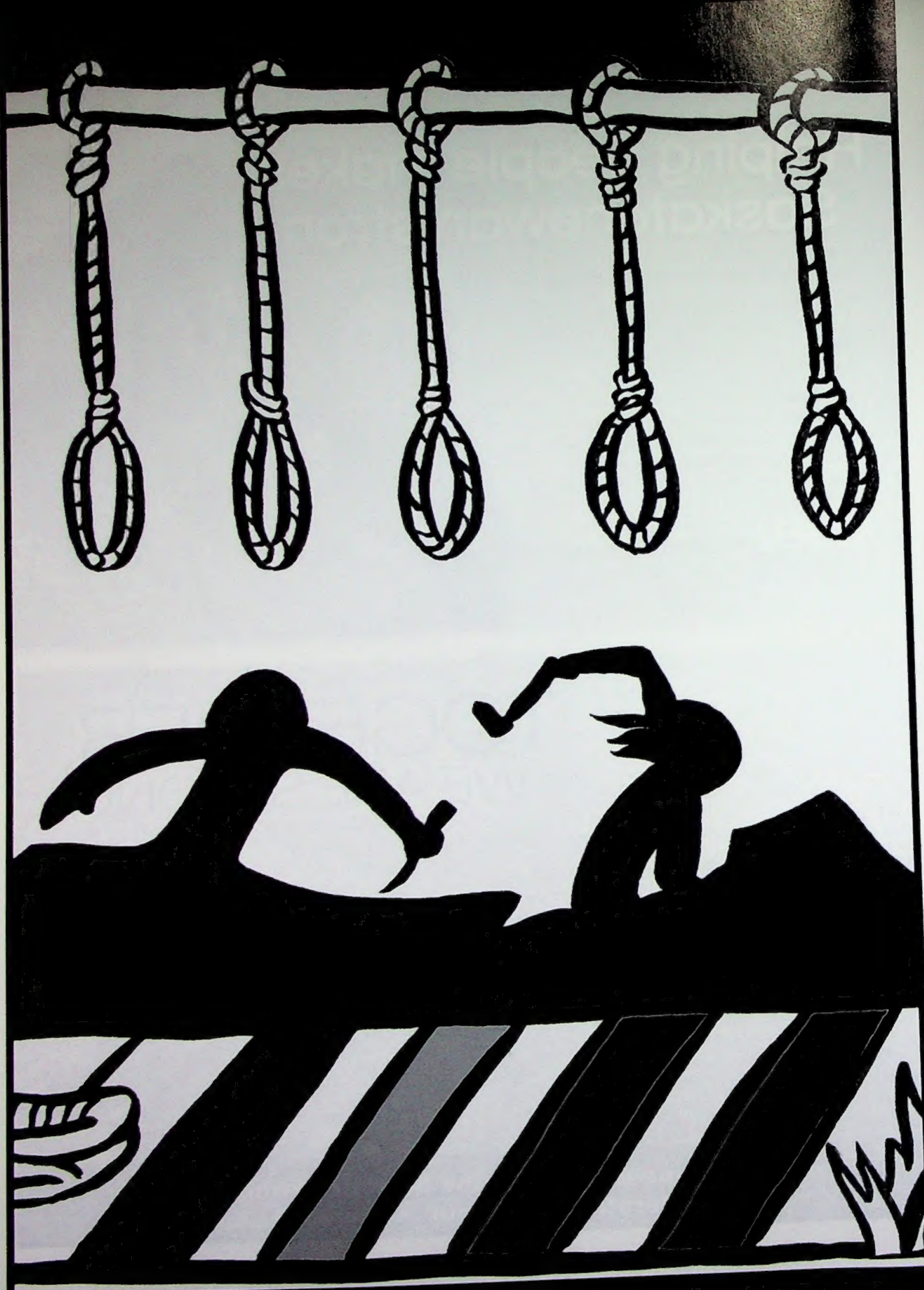
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The Colony is Unwilling to Share Fire

The Tsilhqot'in steal truth and justice

By Russell Samuel Myers Ross

Two worlds overlap, drifting sullenly between clouds and shadows. Only one body desires to consume itself in darkness overnight. Suited as predatory capitalists on a mission, manifest destiny manages to migrate across fictitious borders on its way to harvest flesh. War for "Whites" means humiliation to satisfy power through the rigours of sacrificial violence. Men aiding the men of property unshackle my ancestral relatives and lead them to a wooden structure. With the river's strength flowing behind them, the water scripts its forever return downstream only to come back. That day in 1864, among a modest crowd drawn into the spectacle, five honest men hang.



The courtroom is a place of doubt. It is sterile and hosts normal temperature to give it the godly touch of neutrality. It appears the carpeted floors are kept relatively clean for the dirt that enters. The symbols of the Crown lay hanging: the Queen and country flag form the background. While the floor is seething red, the stained wooden tables divide the judge's seat from everyone else. Black robes encompass formality, and their objectivity shows no sign of emotion. In the air, the audience nervously sits in cold silence. In the air, the reporters tick their scroll with ink, echoing words in print that act as blunt and crooked weapons. Deflecting and breaking truth is the substitute for mass violence. The damage has been done. It's time to clean up. Someone calls this place Justice. Even in modern times – where media coins currency as message – time calls us back to the source.



Paradoxically, you think much has changed, and nothing has. Lingered trauma, death, being a part of life, changes things.

A large boat is anchored off the shore, a fair distance from port. The muddy scum from the shipmates' boots rubs against the deck. The air is crisp. Every passing breath leaves tracks in the wind. The tobacco withers below rolling clouds. The morning is chill, more than enough to keep the living awake. Back against the ocean's elements, every person on the coast is dying in agony, bursting in pockmarks and shrill tears.

All the while, the doctor, in good health, waits. He witnesses the last sorrows, and dying embers wither as if purgatory sits patiently along the beach. The timing is scientific, estimated. It has proven to work over and over again with repeatable success. He begins to pace back and forth in the sand, knowing he has a task ahead of him. Never turn back for too long. Committed, these men hastily hold the stench, while peeling the scabbed skin into containers ready for export.



Peering at an imaginary piece of history, a newly crafted painting titled Justice is permanently embedded in the B.C. legislature. An Indian man waits in a makeshift Quesnel courtroom, held in front of colonial officials like a little child, for justice to be done. The rules change, of course, when an Indian awaits trial. The legislature, where this picture hangs, represents the colony, which entered someone else's country and mandated a foreign law to supersede the original peoples' laws. Embarrassed by the potentially offensive mythological propaganda the mural displays, the colony first fails in its attempt to remove it and then decides to cover it up. Such a fitting response by colonizers: hiding their mistakes and then layering past history with story after story.





His story is elusive. She has her story mediated; it diverges into opposite directions. While one group of women arrives in Victoria by boat to be claimed by men, another group of women, gatekeepers and matriarchs, becomes a target of attack. His story is split between two wives, though he loves one more. Before his death, William Manning's wife waits in Victoria with their two children, unaware of his activities. Meanwhile, he uses a Tsilhqot'in woman to gain access to Bendziny, an HBC custom of legitimate infiltration. He quickly builds a roadhouse, fences the pre-empted property occupied by a large Tsilhqot'in village, secures access to shared communal water, then aids the McDonald clan in armed robbery.



The medium of choice is the smallpox weapon: strong medicine, they say. Plagues sweep the land with carriers of guns, religion following closely at hand. Weapons wielded by conquerors assume there is no talking back, especially to the dead. Purging fear is easy when done with calculated violence. Known for his brawling manner and drunken fits, Ranald MacDonald travels extensively and becomes carrier of the weapon. Perhaps, you may say, the medium comes from somewhere else, from imported disease, religion, guns, and language. A philosophy of knowing thyself, the purifying kills the Indian in you. You, complicated soul, seek strong medicine. Some see the skin as mixed-blood and call you Métis after all.



On Indian land, bronze statues assume permanence. The poles carved of cedar stand tall but return to the earth like every person. In honour of past spirits, they watch over us. The colony's capitol names its streets in honour of Indian killers: Douglas, Begbie, Tolmie, Helmcken. The killers watch over us, their presence emboldened by their permanence, like the horror it came from. You haunt us in the living; our living haunts you. The statue stands as long as the regime remains. The regime remains and so must the shadowy story of lies and fear.



Doubt. Empire writes right. Empire state building escalates, constructing zones, securing walls, to divide people into camps. The logic of Empire becomes a "conform or die" class system that takes other people's land. Wealth is private. Poverty is created. The unrecognized names of the land erase original nations just by sketching a map: Tsilhqot'in, Nuuchah-nulth, Stl'atl'imc, Nlaka'pamux, Secwepemc, Ktunaxa, Haisla, Haida, Nuxalk, Heiltsuk, Dakeh, Dunne-za, Gitksan, Nisga'a, Tsimshian, Kwakwaka'wakw, Syilx, Tahltan, Tlingit. Drawn in ink, everywhere the disappearance commences. Do you still believe that imperial takeover is innocent?

Would you believe that Governor James Douglas, of mixed blood they say, was so devoted to the Empire's expanse that he helped orchestrate a plan of genocide while at the same time pre-empting occupied land? A loyal Hudson's Bay Company employee, fully aware of British policy to obtain the extinguishment of land title through treaties, he supports his friends in carrying out the cheapest means possible for a bankrupt colony. Douglas, in competition with New Westminster, positioned to evade America's northern migration, abandoned by his superiors in London, executes a plan to solve the headache of purchasing land from an Indian majority. Or assume – like every other colonist whose purpose was to cultivate other people's land – that we admire the will of men whose desire is to, at best, establish reserves for future submission.



My family says our ancestors killed Samandlin, Donald McLean, to end the war. Leaving from Hat Creek Ranch, the Scot's last days are spent heading a heavily armed militia into the Tsilhqot'in. A Hudson's Bay Company employee, fully aware of British policy to obtain the extinguishment of land title through treaties, he seeks violent punishment as his means of dispute resolution. If you want to talk, then blood will be spilt. Knowingly, there was no need for talking. The Tsilhqot'in leave shavings from trees strewn along the ground as bait. Samandlin, aggressive and arrogant, bearing armour that once saved his life, catches a bullet through his cold heart. He dies miles upstream from where he once abandoned his Native wife and children.



Alexis is the Tsilhqot'in mediator who enters the scene soon after Samandlin is put to rest. Leading a group of horsemen, he times his arrival with that of the colony's newly appointed governor, Frederick Seymour. Alexis and company hold their guns high overhead and dismount to acquaint themselves with the Chief, welcoming the crowd with a song to grant respect for the official occasion. Alexis speaks French, learned from his time interacting with the Métis traders, and wears a dark blue French suit. Translations required: the first nation-to-nation meeting is a curiosity of tense, conflicted feelings, though an understanding is forged. The tobacco offered to the Tsilhqot'in days before by the commissioner bears with it an atmosphere of safety and mutuality and, with it, the hope to amend peaceful relations. Afterward, Seymour requests and is granted safe passage from the territory. The war leaders are brought forward as a gamble to broker peace. Not long after, a handful of Tsilhqot'in are chained and led by horses to Quesnel for trial.

The trial, which ends in hangings, is a sham spectacle to enforce brute retaliation and terror. Shedding light towards the shadows of secrecy reveals this conclusion.

Lights, please! The public is shut out, the courtroom is closed to media. Commissioner Cox, assistant gold commissioner and temporary militia leader, bars the doors. Matthew Begbie is the judge, appointed by Sir Hugh McCalmont Cairns to take care of Indians and Irishmen. As soon as he arrives in Quesnel, he invests in property. Begbie's regular clerk is Arthur Bushby, who is, coincidentally, the land registrar. As Douglas' son-in-law, he avoids the trial to evade disclosing insider information. Similarly, potential witnesses to the warring events – John Ogilvy, Frederick Whympier, Francis Poole, and Chief Inspector Brew, among many others – disappear during the trial.

The legal counsel representing the Tsilhqot'in defendants happens to be the brother-in-law to Alex McDonald, the man killed by these same defendants. George Barnston, Begbie's acquaintance and the colony's first lawyer admitted to the bar, is also a legal and business partner to Ranald McDonald, the man who happened to precede the parallel route of smallpox and land pre-emption.

A trial conducted by acquaintances and partners in crime. Every move is a conflict of interest. Justice, if you dare call it that, in the colony begins as an elaborate symbolic hoax. Opened wounds of war remain.



War, for Tsilhqot'in, is a commitment to persevere, accompanied always by the need for peaceful relations. A survivor writes in his testimonial that the Tsilhqot'in were enjoying the night singing and dancing just beyond their camp. So little did he know. His time at Bute Inlet was coming to an end. Having witnessed threats of smallpox, rape, and all-round disrespect, the Tsilhqot'in were timely in preparing for war. The song and dance is a ceremonial commitment to fulfil a duty. Once you begin, you cannot stop. As the sun bursts on the horizon, the Tsilhqot'in descend upon the road builders' camp. The aftermath at Bute Inlet leaves fourteen dead. Three survivors retreat to Victoria. The Tsilhqot'in always leave one alive to tell the story. By deleting smallpox, his colonial story gets it wrong.



Tell the truth. The choice: if, by chance, people build a society based on lies and deceit, then we must decide whether we will choose the path of truth and justice together. The ultimatum: your prison is built on genocide. Its ultimate wreckage destroys healthy, communal life, scarred by the insistence of the colonial divide, torn by negation of the human spirit. What are you going to do about it?

Tell the truth.

On separate occasions, Raven recognizes that someone guards light and fire. The keeper's protection chooses not to share. Like colonial times, the men of property have chosen to secretly covet the wealth and maintain the language of deceit buried in myth. But Raven takes every measure to get inside the walls of the keeper's house, once as needle-born child and once as a pitch headdress dancer flying with the fire. Today, the sacred symbol that yearns to be set free is truth, hollowed consistently by the unreality of white supremacy. Colonial sickness is epidemic in the legislature, in the courtroom, secured in public spaces by erected statues, whitewashed maps carved on women, marked by stretched children's arms.

Tell the truth.

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VIGILANTE NATION

On guard against Canada's 'most wanted' list

By Fathima Cader

Illustrations by Shira Ronn

“**W**anted” posters are hard to come by these days outside of old westerns, but last July, ministers Jason Kenney and Vic Toews released a “most-wanted” list of 30 people the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) had deemed inadmissible to Canada. Kenney and Toews announced that these migrants had committed war crimes, and asked for the public’s help in locating and deporting them. The list came complete with mug shots and a 1-888 tip line for civilians to call with sightings, but no details about the basis or the seriousness of the government’s accusations.

Within a week, the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) had apprehended five of the individuals. By April 2012, a total of 16 people had been deported, and the Conservatives had expanded the list’s parameters to include migrants accused of breaking and entering. Evidently, the list has become a permanent and ongoing means of enlisting public support in the burgeoning business of deportation.

If there is indeed a need for civilian vigilance, it must be against the Conservatives’ off-loading of policing of racialized communities onto a citizenry already bombarded with anti-migrant fearmongering, and soliciting public support in sustaining a system of deportation that is both ethically and legally suspect.

The ‘poppycock’ of the people

The Conservatives use polarizing rhetoric to demonize leftists on all manner of issues, from environmentalism to Internet privacy, and to bolster the Conservative image of the mainstream citizen as someone who mocks all remotely progressive perspectives as fringe.

This was true, for instance, when the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops criticized a previous iteration of Bill C-31, Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act, which

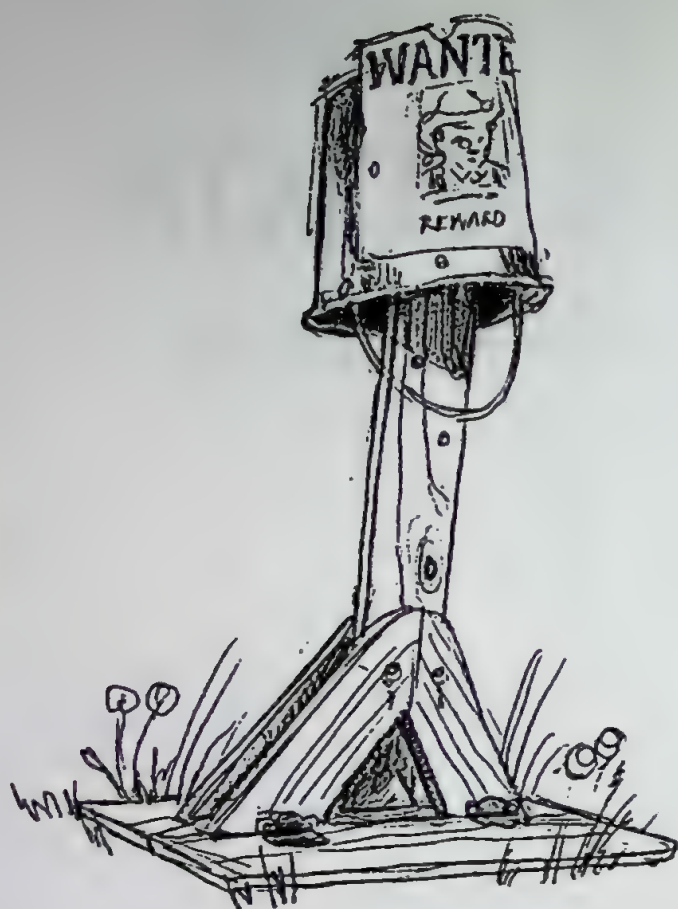
mandates the unreviewable detention for at least one year of refugees who use “irregular means” to flee persecution, including minors. Kenney, who identifies as staunchly Catholic, dismissed the bishops’ concerns as the work of “ideological bureaucrats ... producing political letters signed by pastors who may not have specialized knowledge in certain areas of policy.” Yet the fact that IRB adjudicators do not have specialized knowledge in criminal policy has not stopped Kenney from claiming they can identify war criminals.

When the CBC did not immediately publicize the list, Toews publicly berated them. He insisted that “the state broadcaster” should be working more closely with law-enforcement agencies. When Amnesty International issued its critique of the list, Kenney ridiculed their letter as “poppycock” and “self-congratulatory moral preening,” which he contrasted with “the common sense of the people and the law.” However, what he calls the public’s common sense is nothing other than the xenophobia he seeks to normalize. The British Columbia Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA) cautioned that the list would “reinforce existing xenophobia, hurting all newcomers, particularly in the context of repeated recent government messaging associating refugees and immigrants with criminality, fraud and abuse.”

Our brother’s keeper

The BCCLA’s warning was borne out by the government’s success in getting at least some citizens to moonlight as spies without, as *Toronto Star* columnist Carol Goar put it, “questioning the morality of turning in their neighbours, customers and compatriots, let alone any stranger who bears a likeness to the often grainy images on the website.”

The *National Post*, which described the Conservatives’ turn to vigilante anti-immigrant tracking as “a complete



If there is indeed a need for civilian vigilance, it must be against the Conservatives' off-loading of policing of racialized communities onto a citizenry already bombarded with anti-migrant fearmongering.

determinedly he depicts racialized communities as guileless pawns: "I think that's patently ridiculous. To the contrary, we've received nothing but a phenomenally positive response from new Canadians in general. And the evidence of that is most of the useful tips coming from the public are generated from cultural communities in which these people have been situated in Canada. So we thank members of those communities for their cooperation. New Canadians understand what perhaps some of the left-wing NGOs don't."

In pitting "new Canadians" against "left-wing NGOs," Kenney perpetuates racist stereotypes of immigrant communities as inherently conservative. This is especially insulting given how actively Kenney seeks the mass deportations of immigrants to places of documented war crimes and torture, like Sri Lanka and Mexico.

Yet migrant rights organizations in three different cities successfully coordinated a campaign in which "the public" enthusiastically flooded the tip line with information on sightings of Kenney and Toews. The CBSA has provided no comment on how many of the thousands of phone calls they say they received in response to their call for tips were from these pranksters with a cause.

Fighting torture with torture

Under domestic and international law, Canada cannot deport people to countries where they would be at serious risk of grave human rights violations, including torture, the death penalty, and extrajudicial execution. As Amnesty International put it, "sending an accused torturer off to be tortured does not help eradicate torture." The BCCLA pointed out: "The label 'suspected war criminals' could potentially put people at increased risk if deported to their home country." Thus, as leading refugee lawyer Lorne Waldman noted: "If the purpose of this policy is to deport such people, then publicizing it is counterproductive."

In October, Waldman stated the list had already led to death threats against one migrant. By December, a federal official concluded that the publicity from the list had put one migrant, Arshad Muhammad, at risk of torture in

reversal of longstanding government policy," published excerpts from emails sent to Toews, and later released under an access to information request, applauding the list. One enthusiast wrote that these "actions should have started long ago," and suggested Canada move faster on deporting "Nazi war criminals." Meanwhile, Vancouver's own homegrown neo-Nazi criminals escaped the interest of authorities for years. Another letter only asked, "Is there a financial reward for helping capture those war criminals?" The thought of people turning strangers in for money is disheartening, especially so when we remember that serial killer Robert Pickton remained free for years, despite all the information about him provided to police by the women he eventually murdered and by their friends and families.

Of course, there is a common thread here. Most of Pickton's victims were Aboriginal. Everyone who was attacked (and in one case lit on fire) by the Vancouver branch of the neo-Nazi group Blood and Honour was racialized. These are not isolated moments of violence. They are the inevitable effects of a systemic racism in which the state disregards the violence regularly visited upon Indigenous and racialized communities while simultaneously targeting them for disproportionate surveillance.

Kenney's response to concerns about the list giving fodder to racists provides an instructive example of how

Pakistan where his family had begun to receive death threats after his mug shot made news there, consequently putting his deportation in question. All of this happened even after Kenney's declaration in August that the migrants were entitled to pre-removal risk assessments, a standard procedure available to all rejected refugee claimants.

This January, an Access to Information request revealed that, even before the list went public, the CBSA had been warned it could prove counterproductive. The fact that the government still went on to defend the list's circulation as "integral in our efforts to locate and remove" migrants indicates that the Conservatives' zeal for deporting people is trumped only by their commitment to fearmongering.

Why have courts when you've got the IRB?

The "most-wanted" list worked only because the government knew it could confidently rely on the public's ignorance of the differences between Canada's immigration and criminal systems. It has exploited that ignorance to undermine the rule of law and the presumption of innocence, values that Kenney otherwise likes to celebrate as distinctly Canadian.

In a personal letter lambasting Amnesty International, Kenney maintained that "the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) does not make allegations or accusations – it makes formal findings of fact." But as Waldman has explained, IRB decisions are immigration findings, not determinations of criminal guilt. Determining criminal guilt is the exclusive domain of criminal law, which has a higher burden of proof than the IRB. The IRB is not a court; it is an administrative tribunal. Its adjudicators are not judges; they are government-appointed decision makers.

Moreover, as the BCCLA stated, Canada's immigration laws have "very broad inadmissibility provisions ... which go far beyond people who have actually committed crimes to people who only have an indirect association with crimes."

For instance, the fifth person from the list to be arrested, Abraham Bahaty Bayavuge, has denied any wrongdoing, saying he was only a computer technician. Kenney's rejoinder was very vague: "My understanding is that [Bayavuge] was involved in a former Congolese government that was gravely implicated in such crimes."

Similarly, between 2009-2011 the Conservatives labelled Tamil asylum seekers "criminals" and "terrorists" for alleged associations with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which had been at war with the Sri Lankan government. Lawyers have stressed that the LTTE forced many civilians to provide menial services, such as digging ditches, against their will. Nevertheless, the government deported them to Sri Lanka despite knowledge of rampant war crimes there.

In any event, while the principles of fair trial are fundamental to both international and domestic law, Kenney has derided any interest in following these rules as an "ideological process obsession." Instead, he has characterized the government's flouting of these checks and balances as proof that Conservatives are exceeding their international obligations.

Why prosecute when you can deport?

While more than willing to accuse migrants of being war criminals, the Conservatives have refused to lay criminal charges and pursue trials that could ascertain any of the migrants' guilt or innocence, despite being empowered and, in some instances, obliged under both domestic and international law to investigate and prosecute people accused of committing war crimes elsewhere. Accordingly, the family of one of the migrants, Khalil Abdul Khalil, has stated it will be filing a defamation suit against the CBSA.

But why would a government infamous for "tough on crime" rhetoric not want to bring a war criminal to justice? After all, Kenney maintains the migrants "are not merely 'accused' or 'alleged' human rights violators."

As both Amnesty International and the BCCLA have noted, there is no assurance that once deported these individuals will face any investigations in their return countries. Apparently this is so with Cristobal Gonzalez-Ramirez. He was on the list and deported to Honduras, where a local human rights group is concerned that he may be able to avoid responsibility for crimes he allegedly committed there. Similarly, the Peruvian embassy in Ottawa said they only learned about Manuel de la Torre Herrera and Henry Pantoja Carbonel through the media and that as far as they know, "these two men are not subjects of any investigation or criminal procedure in Peru."

Kenney has responded that the government "is not obligated to conduct full-blown trials, at the cost of millions of taxpayer dollars, to prosecute every inadmissible individual for crimes committed in distant countries, often decades ago." Yet the Conservative government has had no qualms about pushing through omnibus crime Bill C-10, which will cost taxpayers millions of dollars at a time when crime rates are at an all-time low.

Kenney claims his "preeminent goal ... is defending Canada." Yet he has provided no evidence that these people, accused of crimes from "distant countries, often decades ago," pose any threat to Canada's safety.

Of course, the real value of these deportations is their air of finality. They score more political points in these anti-immigrant times than do trials, which generally allow for appeals. Still, the government could have easily deported

The Conservatives have succeeded in getting at least some citizens to moonlight as spies without, as *Toronto Star* columnist Carol Goar put it, "questioning the morality of turning in their neighbours, customers and compatriots, let alone any stranger who bears a likeness to the often grainy images on the website."

these migrants without labelling them war criminals. That, however, would have denied the government the tough-on-crime capital it so desperately seeks.

Within a month of its initial release, the government expanded the list to include people wanted for "serious criminality." The CBSA has yet to define serious criminality, but judging from the information they do provide, even breaking and entering warrants the label. There are now 40 people on the list, colour-coded by apprehension, deportation, and newness of listing.

Many of the descriptions of the migrants are impenetrably vague. They read, in their entirety: "This individual is the subject of an active Canada-wide warrant for removal because he is inadmissible to Canada. This individual has been convicted of an offence outside of Canada that, if committed in Canada, would constitute a Canadian offence." What the CBSA conveniently leaves out is that convictions in some countries do not necessarily constitute legal findings

of guilt in Canada, as not all countries provide for the same due process in criminal proceedings as Canada.

While the "most-wanted" list is ostensibly intended to bring perpetrators of violence to justice, we must remember that this list is being deployed against a backdrop of blatant state hypocrisies. Besides Kenney's drive to deport even non-war criminals to places of widespread violence, Toews has authorized the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to release information to foreign agencies, despite the risk that this will lead (as it already has) to the torture of Canadian citizens.

What we learn from the Conservatives' wilful denial of the public's intelligence and humanity is that what is at stake is not so much what happens at borders as what happens within them. Though the Conservatives are obsessed with keeping most people out of Canada, they are much more interested in ensuring that we all live here in a state of perpetual fear of one another. In opposing their throwbacks to a cowboy age, ours is a commitment to meaningful cross-community trust and solidarity. ⑤

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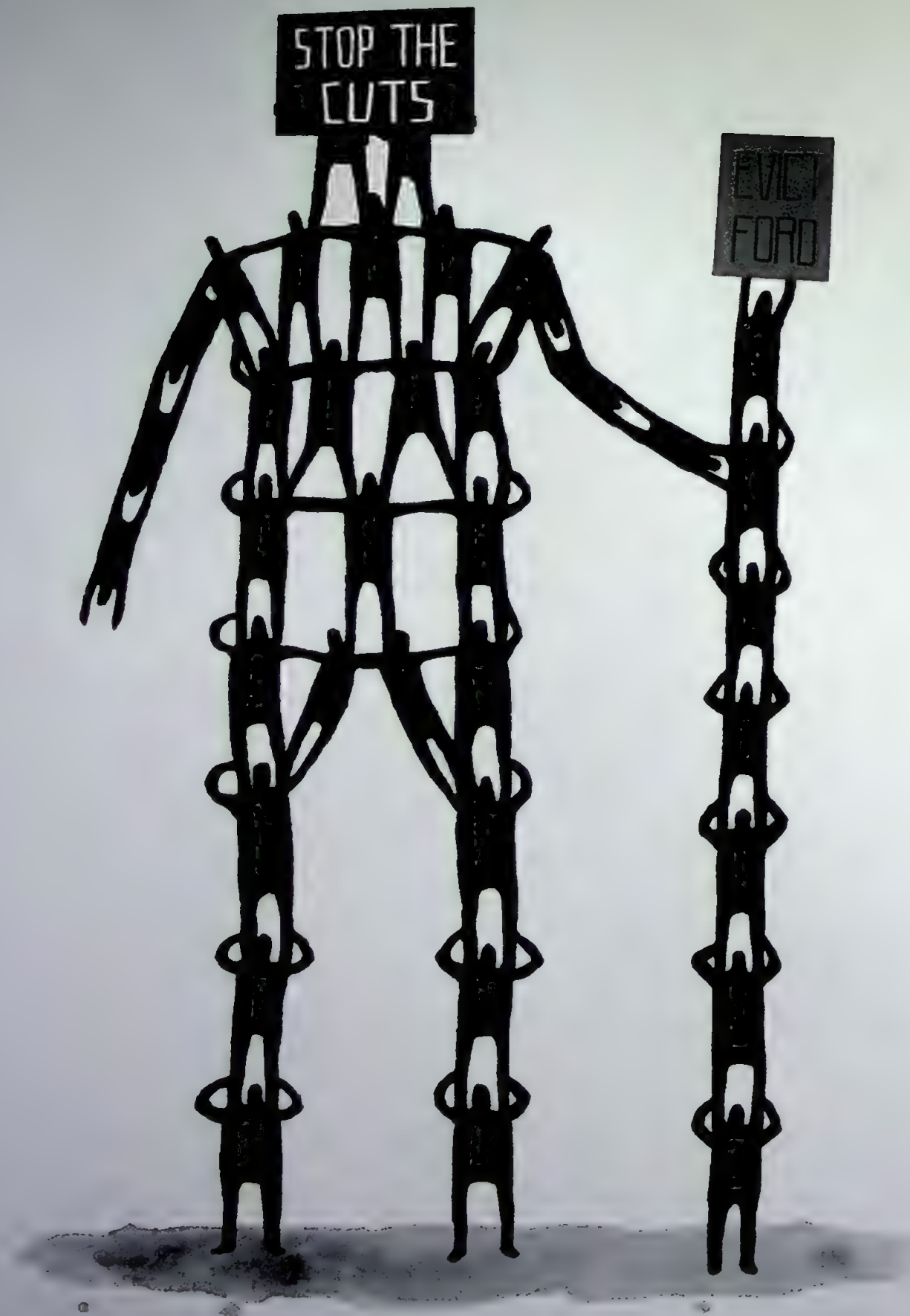
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United Against the Austerity Agenda

After months of mounting public pressure and protests, citywide resistance to Toronto Mayor Rob Ford's 2012 budget succeeded in reversing \$20 million in proposed cuts to social services this January. At the same time, the austerity assault continues in Toronto and across Canada with slashes to social services ranging from libraries to daycares, emergency services, and public transit. Toronto resident and health-care worker Megan Hope caught up with three community organizers at the forefront of the budget battle to discuss what made this victory possible, and what lies ahead in the struggle to stop the cuts.

Illustrations by Chris Foster

Why did Toronto residents oppose the 2012 budget?

Wilson: The 2012 budget included \$88 million in proposed service cuts across almost all areas of the city, including libraries, recreation, community services, arts programs, environmental programs, housing, homeless shelters, child care, transit, and emergency services. These cuts would have jeopardized public and community services for residents across the city and hit low-income communities the hardest.

In the summer of 2011, the city hired KPMG, a high-priced consulting firm, to conduct a core service review and deliver a list of recommended cutbacks. This set the stage for strong public opposition to the 2012 budget before it was even released. It was clear from the public engagement in the core services review process, which included two all-night marathon deputation sessions, that Toronto residents place a high value on our public and community services and that dismantling programs, increasing inequality, and targeting low-income communities is not part of our vision for the city.

Barnett: The 2012 city budget debate in Toronto was not about the needs of city residents, but about cutting the deficit by slashing services and presenting public workers as the problem.

The rhetoric surrounding the deficit was flawed in the first place. Ford cut from revenue-generating sources, such as the vehicle registration tax, and then claimed not to have enough money in the budget for core services. The discussion of the deficit was also based on hyperbole. We were initially told that there was a looming \$770 million deficit, but by the time the dust settled, the city had a \$154 million surplus.

Beth Wilson is the senior researcher with Social Planning Toronto, a non-profit community organization that works to advance social and economic justice issues and promote civic engagement in Toronto.

Victoria Barnett is a volunteer community worker. She coordinates meetings in neighbourhoods across the city with Toronto Stop the Cuts Network.

Maureen O'Reilly is a front-line librarian with the Toronto Public Library. She has been the president of the Toronto Public Library Workers Union since 2010.

O'Reilly: Rob Ford was elected on a mandate to cut the "grave train" at city hall. But when KPMG delivered its recommendations, it became clear that the agenda was to really dismantle Toronto's public services, to open the city for business, and to privatize city assets for individual gain. This would have had a devastating effect on the livability of the city, and Torontonians were incensed by this all-out attack.

Some have described the clawback of \$20 million in proposed budget cuts as a victory, while elsewhere it has been described as "winning the battle, but losing the war." What is your perspective?

O'Reilly: It was a massive victory in that these changes would not have even been contemplated months before. New political coalitions were formed, and the omnibus bill to reverse the cuts addressed many of the concerns that arose in the public consultation process. It also reversed many of the Ford administration's directives.

When Councillor Cho's motion to protect the library service from further cuts was passed, cheers and clapping erupted in the rotunda of city hall. In all my years of attending budget meetings, I have never witnessed such a response from the public. Clearly, the city had won that night.

In either the federal or provincial arena, such an event would have resulted in a non-confidence vote and the government would have been forced to resign and call an election. Unfortunately, this does not play out the same way in municipal government.

We have seen in recent weeks, especially in the debate over transit, that the Ford administration has lost power and authority to govern. There have been several calls for the mayor's resignation. The budget battle was an important victory in instilling confidence that we can effect change at city hall.

Wilson: It was a major accomplishment to get city council to take tens of millions in proposed cuts off the table. When the budget was launched in November, it was not at all clear that we would be successful in moving council to save services in any significant way.

It was soon clear that library closures and cuts to student nutrition programs were not going to go through – there weren't a lot of council members lining up to take food out of the mouths of hungry children – but it looked like most of the cuts were going to stick.

Ultimately, on the floor of city council, almost \$19 million in cuts were taken off the table. That just never happens. Usually by the time a budget hits the floor of council it is mostly a done deal. In the end, while we didn't end up with a progressive budget, communities were successful in saving vital services on account of mass mobilization on a scale that we have not seen in years.

The budget vote has also shaken up the dynamics on city council and emboldened many members of council. The mayor and his administration have been unable to move forward with selling off 10 per cent of Toronto Hydro or the mass sell-off of hundreds of Toronto Community Housing

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residents' homes. City council has reasserted its position in support of expanding light-rail transit rather than the subway expansion promoted by the mayor. These recent events would have been unimaginable a few months ago. The budget vote was a significant turning point.

Barnett: In the broadest of senses, no real victory is possible in the sham electoral democracy that we live in. Until we have meaningful community control over community resources, mobilizing around budgets in the age of austerity will continue to be about fighting over scraps.

At the same time, there was a very real victory in that people from all walks of life became involved in defending their city services and demanding more. Toronto Stop the Cuts Network helped form 11 neighbourhood groups that are organizing across the city, and that is a victory. It's a small step in building the kind of people power necessary to create real transformative change.

City councillors consistently spoke of hearing from their constituents that they opposed the cuts. Can you describe how your organization mobilized or campaigned against the proposed budget? What were some of the specific actions or steps you took in organizing against the cuts?

Barnett: The idea to form the Toronto Stop the Cuts Network emerged in a meeting between labour activists and community organizers from the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, No One Is Illegal – Toronto, Toronto New Socialists, and others. We called a meeting of allies and developed a strategy that ran parallel to the budget consultation process.

When the city surveyed Toronto residents, we organized our own people's poll, with organizers both standing on

street corners and conducting online polls. This gave us the contacts to call meetings in a few neighbourhoods.

When the city organized meetings in different wards to talk about the budget, we organized our own meetings in neighbourhoods across the city, many of which evolved into ongoing neighbourhood groups.

When the city organized open meetings for residents, we organized our own mass meeting. Over 600 people came together, drafted a declaration from scratch, and conducted a vote among those assembled. We then distributed this declaration over email lists and on social media, gaining the signatures of over 3,000 people. Those who signed the declaration were encouraged to join an existing neighbourhood group if there was one, or to create one if there were enough people signing on from that area.

With this momentum, in addition to door-to-door community organizing and online outreach, we were able to build for a mass mobilization on September 24 when a special city council meeting was to take place to vote on the recommendations by KPMG. At the last minute, the city postponed the discussions until the actual budget vote on January 17.

On January 17, we organized a joint rally with Respect Toronto, a community/labour coalition headed up by the Toronto and York Region Labour Council. All of this culminated in the new motion that was brought to the council floor.

It is critical to note that throughout this process there were dozens of groups across the city mobilizing to defend specific services, be they libraries, community centres,

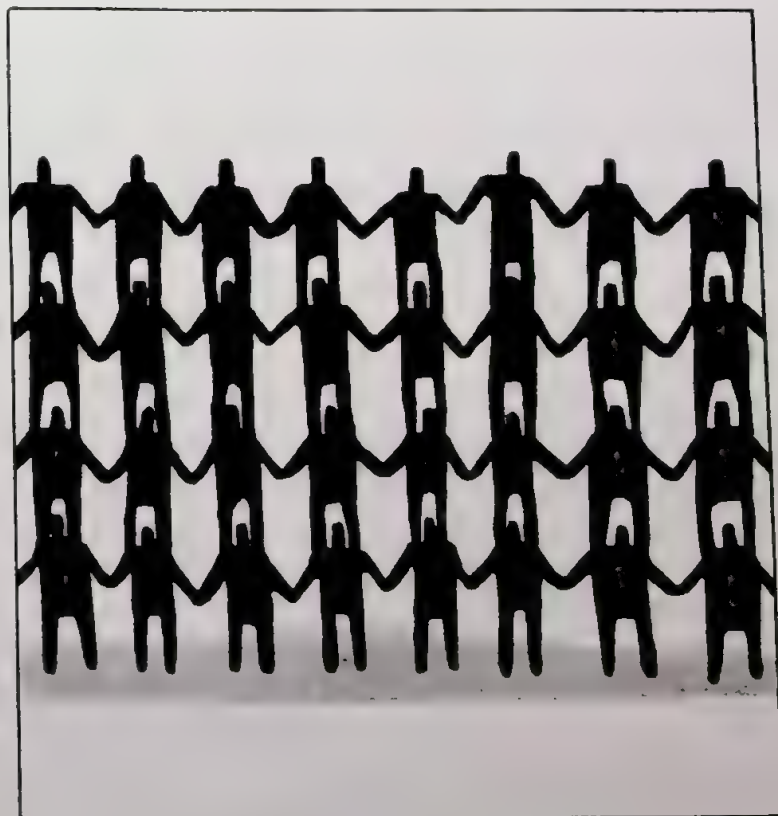
wading pools, or what have you. Stop the Cuts Network was only part of this broad uprising against the mayor.

Wilson: Social Planning Toronto (SPT) has been involved in several ways. Through our city budget watch blog and email list, we have monitored and reported on every aspect of the budget process, from budget launch in November to final vote in January. We have provided analysis on the budget and promoted opportunities for community engagement. We canvassed each member of council to ask when they would be holding their local budget town hall meeting for constituents, and helped to promote these meetings widely.

We also created a map of Toronto that showed the location of service cuts and how low-income neighbourhoods would be disproportionately impacted, which caught the attention of councillors and media.

In our deputation to the budget committee, we spoke about the cuts impacting seniors, including the proposed elimination of the Hardship Fund, a city program that helps low-income seniors with serious health issues. Working with several seniors' organizations we launched a campaign to save the Hardship Fund through the media. The *Toronto Star* dedicated news stories and an editorial to the topic, calling out individual councillors who had voted to consider cutting the program. In the end, the Hardship Fund was saved.

SPT always organizes an annual member forum on the city budget after it is released. This year, a panel of a dozen people working in community services, the environment, arts, and labour provided an analysis of the 2012 budget in the days



There was a real coming together of labour and community groups fighting for a common good across the city. This was expressed at the most basic level of both sides coming together to share their stories. In the over 15 years that I have been involved in labour issues, this is the first time that I witnessed such a close collaboration.

following its release, which helped get people up to speed on what was an enormous and complex budget. Our staff also organized community budget forums across the city to engage local residents in the budget process.

O'Reilly: Library workers recognized at the conclusion of our collective bargaining in 2009 that greater challenges awaited us both at the municipal and at the library administration level. We knew that we had to better position ourselves to get our message out.

Fortunately we had already begun work in this area, and we were able to react quickly to the KPMG report recommending branch closures with the launch of Project Rescue and the online Love a Librarian petition, which greatly assisted us in our fight. Responses to the petition were collated based on postal address and sent as letters to the councillor for that area.

We have been told that the emails in support of the library service represented the greatest number of emails ever received on a given subject at city hall. Some councillors received over 2,000 emails from their constituents alone, and over 50,000 Torontonians signed the original petition.

Library workers also launched the My Library Matters to Me contest which featured, as the prize, lunch with one of 11 participating Canadian authors, most notably Margaret Atwood. This contest, along with read-ins, an appearance at the Word On The Street festival, and other cultural events allowed Torontonians and library workers to come together and express their mutual support for the library service.

What was effective about the mobilizations? What were the weaknesses?

Barnett: Toronto Stop the Cuts Network now has 11 neighbourhood groups that continue to organize across the city. The budget was only one step in a long journey that will include continued struggles at municipal, provincial, and federal levels. The neighbourhood groups will continue to organize, and it's been great to see the expanding network of people committed to making change.

In terms of weaknesses, one of the primary obstacles we've faced has been disseminating information. Like all grassroots groups, we are run completely by volunteer labour. Ford has the media at his doorstep and the financial resources to reach out to all parts of the city whereas we have to build that power and engage people without those resources. That's part of what we're organizing for: community control over community resources.

Wilson: The educational work, the media work, the mapping, the ward teams, working together with residents and groups with common cause – it was all important in pushing back against the cuts. But we know this agenda of cutbacks is far from over.

There's a lot more work to be done to engage people around the issue of contracting out and privatization, which is a major agenda of this administration. Most of the focus of discussion has been on cuts to services. It's often easier to mobilize around the loss of a service, such as the closure of a community pool, which people can relate to directly, than it is around saving good public service jobs. It's important for people to make the connection between good public services and good public service jobs.

O'Reilly: The amount of information that was made available to communities, outlining both the short-term and long-term implications of the budget, was invaluable in laying the foundation for change in this city.

One of the major weaknesses was the sheer number of issues that needed to be addressed and activities that needed support. This was a product of the scope of the attack levelled by the Ford administration, and I am sure it was an intended strategy on their part. There were several attempts to pit the various groups against one another and portray them as competitors, which were largely unsuccessful.

Both community and labour groups organized against this budget. How do you think community and labour groups worked well together?

Barnett: I think the important thing to note here is that labour is part of the community and the community is part of labour. We were all working together for a city that is livable, sustainable, and accommodating to all of its residents. Rob Ford and his allies were, and are, trying to take that away to please big businesses and to further enrich themselves. They tried to pit Toronto residents against labour groups, which is why it was so important for all of these groups to work together to take back the city that we want, where the needs of the residents are put before the bottom line.

Wilson: Local labour groups have done a lot of work to reach out to community and support community services under threat. Residents and community organizations are speaking out against the contracting out of public services, as labour groups take a strong stand against service cutbacks.

We have Rob Ford to thank for the opportunity to foster our solidarity and build connections between community and labour. The sheer breadth of the proposed cuts and the mass impact on a range of communities has brought us together and united us in common cause.

O'Reilly: I think there was a real coming together of labour and community groups fighting for a common good across the city. This was expressed at the most basic level of both sides coming together to share their stories. In the over 15 years that I have been involved in labour issues, this is the first time that I witnessed such a close collaboration.

What are the next steps for those opposed to service, public sector, and labour cuts?

Wilson: We have to keep organizing in our communities, and in key wards, coming together with individuals and groups with common cause to ensure that the momentum created does not die down. It would be exciting to return to a place where we are not protesting against threats to our city but rather engaging in city building where we are working toward the creation of an inclusive and equitable city for all.

Barnett: We have to continue with more outreach and more education. It's time to make the structures we have now stronger by getting more people engaged in whichever way is most relevant to them, be it working on issues around housing, poverty, migrant justice, transit, the environment, labour, or anything else.

We need to continue building connections and building bridges across all of these issues in order to make our work more successful and to keep those in power on their toes. It's this type of work that they don't want us to do, and that's why we have to keep doing it.

O'Reilly: The next immediate step for us is to oppose further labour cuts during the collective bargaining process. The loss of 107 full-time equivalency positions in the library during the budget process has been devastating. We were already facing a severe staffing shortage, and this has just added to the challenge.

We must continue our outreach in our communities and continue a dialogue focused on how to counter the austerity agenda and build the city we want to live in. We have to work hard to ensure that glib references to "gravy" don't take hold in the future and undermine the quality of life here in the city. ☺

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Toronto Stop the Cuts torontostopthecuts.com

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Canada's support for Israel has taken many forms, but perhaps its greatest gift has been its example. As both countries come under increasing scrutiny on the world stage for their crimes against Indigenous peoples, their fates are increasingly bound together.

By Mike Krebs

Illustrations by Shantala Robinson

"There is no better friend to Israel than Canada. We shall always be there for you, and in front of you."

— FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER JOHN BAIRD, JERUSALEM, JANUARY 2012

Canada's support for Israel has a long history, dating back even before Israel was founded. In fact, it was Canada's own Lester B. Pearson who chaired the United Nations committee that recommended the partition of Palestine and the creation of Israel in 1947. Still, there is little question that the diplomatic, military, and economic ties between the two countries have deepened in recent years, coupled with a concerted campaign to stifle criticism of Israel.

The Canadian government's unbending support for Israel is well known, especially within Palestine solidarity circles across Canada. What is less understood is the basis for this support. While economic and geopolitical ties are certainly important factors, the shared history of Canada and Israel as settler societies is crucial to understanding Canada's ongoing support for Israel. Simply put, both countries were founded on the forced displacement of Indigenous peoples and the theft of their lands and resources. And in both cases, these colonial processes continue to the present day.

The similar nature of Canada and Israel as settler societies not only serves as a solid foundation for ideological affinity, but is also the basis for shared interests in the realm of international politics as both countries contend with ongoing attempts by their Indigenous populations to seek justice and redress on the world stage.

Providing a playbook

Canada's support for Israel has taken many forms, but perhaps its greatest gift has been a real-life how-to guide for establishing and maintaining a settler society that includes an array of strategies, tactics, and programs for taking land, subjugating Indigenous populations, and weakening their resistance. It's also worth noting that many of these tactics and strategies were used by the South African apartheid regime, including the Bantustan system and the use of the Dom Pass to restrict the movement of black South Africans.

The Indian Act of 1876 must be seen not only as the centrepiece of Canadian colonial policy towards Indigenous peoples, but also as a blueprint for apartheid. The Indian Act enshrined completely unequal rights, relations, and — over time — vastly disparate living conditions between Indigenous peoples and Canadian settlers. It also represented a policy of extermination as it facilitated the forced assimilation of Indigenous peoples, and deprived Indigenous nations of their right to decide who was and was not "Indian." This was a very gendered process as different standards for retaining "status" were applied to Indigenous women as compared to men, resulting in vast numbers of Indigenous women and their descendants losing not only their recognized status as Indigenous peoples, but also their ability to remain in their communities.

Israel has long engaged in attempts to regulate Palestinian identity, such as granting Palestinians within its borders Israeli citizenship while designating them "Arab Israelis," issuing a complex array of different ID cards to Palestinians in the occupied territories restricting where they can reside and travel, or gradually stripping residency rights from hundreds of thousands of Palestinians with ties to the West Bank and Gaza.

Canada's reservation system was also central to the displacement and containment of Indigenous peoples. In most of what is now Canada, the federal government can point to treaties as affirmation that the land was occupied with the ostensible consent of its Indigenous peoples, though there are also areas, including the majority of British Columbia, where colonization and the establishment of reserves took place with very few treaties. This process is one that continues to this day in a number of ways, most notably in B.C. with what's referred to as the modern day treaty process, in which the only accepted framework for negotiating treaties is through permanent extinguishment of inherent land rights in exchange for fee-simple reserve lands.



Israel's process of colonizing Palestine followed a similar strategy of forced displacement coupled with containment. Gradual settlement began in earnest during the first decades of the 20th century, culminating with the 1948 *Nakba* (the Arabic word for "catastrophe") which saw the displacement of over 750,000 Palestinians from what then became the state of Israel. This process of land theft deepened after 1967 with the expansion of Jewish-only settlements in the occupied territories, a process that continues to the present.

Controlling the movement of Indigenous peoples has also been central to both Canadian and Israel colonialism. Canada's pass system, enacted in 1885, dictated that Indigenous peoples required written permission, including their reasons for leaving, from the local Indian agent to leave their reserves. The pass system was put into place during the North-West Resistance and was justified by the Canadian government as a means of monitoring Indigenous peoples who were potentially participating in or supporting the resistance. Though initially described as a temporary measure, the pass system was used against Indigenous peoples at least until the 1940s.

This model of restricting the basic human right of Indigenous peoples to mobility within their own lands lives on today in Palestine. This includes an elaborate system of permits, checkpoints, and the apartheid wall, which together restrict and regulate the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This is accompanied by the hermetic siege of Gaza, the most extreme expression of controlling movement between and within Palestinian reserves.

A further strategy that Israel has borrowed from Canada is the use of seemingly endless negotiations as a deliberate stalling tactic and a means of further entrenching the control of Indigenous lands and resources. Negotiations also take place in a context of vast disparities in power and, to varying degrees, overt threats of violence. For example, when Treaty

7 was negotiated between the Canadian government and representatives from the Blackfoot Confederacy, the Tsuu T'ina nation, and a number of Nakoda and Assiniboine communities, the representatives of the Crown brought a sizable contingent of North West Mounted Police, who pointed their cannons directly at the Indigenous encampments and occasionally fired at them as a show of force. In an oral account of the signing of Treaty 7, Stoney Nakoda elder Morley Twoyoungmen recalls: "The chiefs said, 'You talk of peace while there are guns pointing at me. This is not peace, please lay down your guns.'"

Israel has also employed the tactic of negotiations with similar success, at the expense of the Palestinian national movement. Throughout the Oslo Accords, the Road Map to peace, the Annapolis conference, and countless other "peace processes," Israel has continued its expansion of illegal settlements and brutal wars against the Palestinian people. At the same time, the most basic demands articulated by the Palestinian movement (ending the occupation, allowing refugees to return to their homelands, and recognizing equal rights for Palestinian citizens of Israel) are invariably outside the parameters of negotiations.

Fates bound together

This shared colonial history is crucial to understanding Canada's support for Israel. The similar nature of the two states creates a solid foundation for ideological affinity wherein, from the Canadian standpoint, there is nothing particularly problematic or controversial about a predominantly European population establishing a state on the lands of racialized people, displacing the original inhabitants, and settling the land as their own. In fact, Israel is often celebrated as an "outpost of civilization" in much the same way that the colonization of Turtle Island (North America) was justified as a "civilizing mission."

Canada and Israel also have shared interests that are somewhat unique to settler societies. The legitimacy of both nation states is regularly challenged by the continued survival and resistance of the Indigenous inhabitants of the lands to which these states lay claim. With the perseverance of the Palestinian struggle and international growth of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, challenges to Israel's "right to exist" as a colonial apartheid state have gained mainstream prominence, but it's important to note that Canada also faces significant challenges from assertions of Indigenous sovereignty. The ongoing struggles in B.C., where the provincial government has had to acknowledge that the vast majority of the land is unceded, provide but one of the more clear examples of challenges to the very legitimacy of Canada's territorial jurisdiction.

In the realm of international politics, Canada plays the role of a proud and uncritical defender of Israel against attempts to address any of its numerous human rights violations or war crimes. Canada has its own interest in ensuring that Israel maintains impunity as it has also come under scrutiny at the UN, which is increasingly used by Indigenous peoples as a forum through which to advance their struggles and seek redress for human rights abuses. Canada has also garnered international attention over its ongoing expansion of the tarsands in Alberta, its continued export of asbestos to the Global South, and the atrocious record of Canadian mining companies in regards to human rights abuses and displacement of (predominantly Indigenous) people in Latin America. If Israel is held accountable for its crimes against Indigenous people on the world stage, Canada has a greater risk of meeting the same fate. It can't allow these precedents to be set, and thus it benefits from ensuring that the UN and its various bodies are kept weak and unable to uphold international law.

A recent example of this is Canada's continued fear of being held accountable for the residential school system as a crime of genocide. According to a recent article in the *Globe and Mail*, the Conservative-appointed chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is conscious of this concern: "Justice Murray Sinclair says the United Nations defines genocide to include the removal of children based on race, then placing them with another race to indoctrinate them. He says Canada has been careful to ensure its residential school policy was not 'caught up' in the UN's definition." As Judge Sinclair explained to a group of students at the University of Manitoba in February, "That's why the minister of Indian Affairs can say this was not an act of genocide ... but the reality is that to take children away and to place them with another group in society for the purpose of racial indoctrination was – and is – an act of genocide and it occurs all around the world."

The Canadian government also benefits from its relationship with Israel by gaining access to Israel's experience with tools of repression either for domestic use or, in the case of Israeli drones, in Afghanistan. Though Canada has developed its own vast experience in this regard through

repeated police and military deployments to subdue Indigenous resistance, Israel has much to share in the way of high-tech means of policing and intelligence gathering developed over decades of repression and warfare against Palestinians. In addition to more overt forms of violent repression, this also includes the repeated use of the "terrorism" label to try to discredit the Palestinian movement, a label that is now increasingly used by the Canadian government in

If Israel is held accountable for its crimes against Indigenous peoples on the world stage, Canada has a greater risk of meeting the same fate.

its propaganda wars against Indigenous peoples and, recently, to smear both Indigenous and non-Indigenous opposition to the tarsands and its associated pipeline projects.

Canada's desire for Israel's expertise in matters of repression underlies the 2008 Canada-Israel Declaration of Intent to enhance co-operation on public security issues, a document signed by representatives of both governments that outlines Canada and Israel's "common threats" and details a "shared commitment to facilitate and enhance cooperation" in areas ranging from border security to correctional services and "terrorist financing."

Unity and solidarity

For Indigenous peoples living in Canada, the principle of unity and solidarity between peoples has often been crucial in continuing their struggles as people of many nations all living on Turtle Island. This unity has been extended to include the Palestinian struggle since at least the 1970s when the American Indian Movement and the Palestine Liberation Organization issued a joint declaration affirming "united resistance to a common form of oppression." These connections must continue and be deepened as our different experiences of resisting Israel and Canada help inform each other.

For Canadians working in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, it must never be forgotten that Indigenous people here are struggling every day to survive the numerous ways in which Canadian apartheid continues to damage the original peoples upon whose land this country was built. It is not simply a matter of moral consistency, though that is of course important. Struggles for Indigenous sovereignty are unique in that they directly challenge the hegemony of Canadian capitalism. For that reason, it is important to bear in mind how supporting Indigenous self-determination will benefit all struggles for social justice within Canada in the long term. Furthermore, coming to terms with what it means to be a part of a settler society in Canada, and the resulting ramifications for both Indigenous peoples and settlers, can only make our ability to support the Palestinian struggle stronger. ⑤



Attawapiskat, revisited

While many Indigenous communities are economically impoverished, they are far from poor.

By Leanne Simpson

Illustration by Amanda Strong

At the time of writing this, three months have passed since Attawapiskat became a household name in Canada. Three months, and the band-aid solution of 22 homes has not been delivered and the community remains virtually unchanged. Three months, and the issues this community brought to the consciousness of Canadians have been all but forgotten.

We all like to believe that things are shifting in Indigenous-state relationships. We like to believe that things are getting better, that we've moved on from the circumstances that created flashpoint events like the Oka Crisis, Ipperwash, and Caledonia. But exceptional circumstances show you your real friends, and the housing crisis in Attawapiskat showed me that Indigenous Peoples have precious few allies in this country.

Three months ago, I was too angry to write about this issue. I was too angry to articulate the very clear set of colonial circumstances that led to this imposed crisis. I was too angry at the familiar response of the mainstream media: recycling the same racist imagery of Indigenous Peoples as desperate, poor, dirty people unable to manage the taxpayer funds Canadians so generously give us. I was too angry at the responses of Canadians, from the outright hate in the comments sections of national and regional online newspapers to the so-called experts selected to comment on the crisis to the punishing, blame-the-victim response of the Conservative government.

Although I was overwhelmed with anger, I was not surprised. This is what history and experience have taught us to expect. But I didn't just feel angry; I also felt very proud. I felt proud of the people of Attawapiskat and Chief Theresa Spence for standing so strong in the face of attack. I felt proud of Mi'kmaq lawyer Pam Palmater taking on the issue night after night on radio and television. I felt proud of Chelsea Vowel, a legally trained Métis writer, when she posted "Dealing

While so many people might only see poverty, we see our relatives, our friends, our families, ourselves. We see people with names and histories and voices, not the poor, helpless victims of a forgotten culture.

with comments about Attawapiskat" on her blog *âpihtawikosisân*. Vowel clearly laid out the numbers for all to see that the people of Attawapiskat were not wasting taxpayers' money, but that the system chronically underfunds First Nations in comparison to Canadians. Her blog post spread like wildfire over social networking sites, eventually getting picked up by *rabble.ca* and the *National Post*. I appreciated her work, and I wondered why the first assumption

so many Canadians made in 2011 was that Attawapiskat was wasting taxpayers' money. Why did Vowel have to generate and supply data to back up the fact that First Nations are not criminals before people could begin to see our perspective?

One of the most difficult parts of this story to watch was the heartbreaking photographs and video footage documenting the worst manifestations of poverty in the North, played over and over in the mainstream media. Indigenous Peoples are all too familiar with conditions like these, and while so many people might only see poverty, we see our relatives, our friends, our families, ourselves. We see that, primarily, the people in these videos are *people*, with names and histories and voices. They are not the poor, helpless victims of a forgotten culture as the images suggested. The people of Attawapiskat are much, much more than just poverty.

As many others have pointed out, the entire natural resource sector of Canada's economy is built upon stolen resources – resources taken from Indigenous lands without fair compensation and without the consent of Indigenous Peoples. The poverty experienced in Indigenous communities is *imposed* poverty – poverty imposed by the Indian Act, poverty imposed by occupation, dispossession, theft, and two centuries of attack on Indigenous cultures, languages, world views, and ways of life. Canadians, with one of the

highest standards of living in the world, are complicit in this because Canada's richness is a direct result of Indigenous poverty.

While many of our communities are economically impoverished in a Western sense, they are far from poor. Our northern communities are rich because they know their languages. They are rich because they have strong connections to their land. They are rich because at least some of their lands exist in a natural state. They are rich because they live in the same community as their grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and extended families. They are rich because they do not rely on material

multinational corporations in exchange for jobs. Community-controlled, local, sustainable, and small-scale economic development is almost never discussed. Indigenous economies, the ones that kept our nations strong for tens of thousands of years, are erased and deemed a relic of the past.

Education is the key to success for Indigenous children. But what kind of education? Education that reflects whose political, cultural, and intellectual traditions? Education in whose language? Curriculum in Canada is devastatingly absent of the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples. Students do not learn about our colonial history. They do not learn

environment. We know that we have to work very hard on behalf of our children to make sure that we provide an environment for them that is an *antidote* to public education. Indigenous parents spend an enormous amount of time undoing the damage that Canadian curricula, some teachers, and some students inflict on our kids. Those of us who want our children to have a profound connection to our territory and our knowledge, to know their own Indigenous language, philosophies, and histories, must do so on our own time, with our own resources.

Yes, the kids of Attawapiskat deserve to have a beautiful school that inspires their greatest creative potential. In that school, I want them to hear their language communicating their histories, their philosophies, their stories and songs from the hearts of their Elders. As part of their schooling, I want those Elders to take them out into their territory so they can feel what it means to be part of the land.

The colonial system works to obfuscate the way out of this mess. Colonialism likes us to believe that what happened between Indigenous peoples and Canada was inevitable – sad but inevitable. It was not. It was a series of choices. Colonialism likes us to believe that while what happened in the past is tragic, things are better now. They are not. We don't have to uphold this system any longer. We can collectively make different choices.

So when nations come together like in the Yinka Dene Alliance and ban Enbridge Northern Gateway pipelines from their territories, Canada is presented with a tremendous opportunity to respect those Indigenous nations by supporting their decision. When Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug says no to mining or Grassy Narrows says no to deforestation, rather than fighting those communities legally, politically, and psychologically, Canada can choose to respect their decisions. Period. This is how we begin to make things better. This is how we make different decisions. This is what the start of a respectful relationship looks like. Yes, it is time for change, and the ball is in Canada's court. ⑥

While many of our communities are economically impoverished in a Western sense, they are far from poor. Our northern communities are rich because they know their languages. They are rich because they have strong connections to their land. They are rich because they live in the same community as their grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and extended families.

wealth to bring them happiness. They are rich because, despite years of disrespect, they have survived and in many ways flourished.

The mainstream media does not see this richness, nor do they take a step back to examine the broader set of forces that has led to the crisis in Indigenous-state relations. And so, the well-meaning solution to Indigenous poverty becomes economic development, which to me is tremendously misguided.

Our people have repeatedly been shown that industrial development does not solve our economic development problems. The diamond mine hasn't helped Attawapiskat. Yet over and over, settler governments, which are primarily concerned with opening up Indigenous territories to development, paint the choice as either protecting Indigenous territories and living in abject poverty, or sacrificing the territory to hyperdevelopment by

Indigenous perspectives on that history, our political traditions or systems of governance, or anything that would lead them to critically evaluate Canada's relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

How is this preparing Canadian children to interact with our people on complex and difficult issues, or to deal responsibly with the disaster they are inheriting? How can we expect different outcomes in Indigenous-settler relations for the next generation when the education system is designed to create citizens who will uphold the very broken system we have right now?

And what does this do to Indigenous children? We know the answer to that one because virtually every Indigenous person in Canada knows what it is like to be educated in a system that silences, erases, belittles, and even demonizes anything Indigenous. We know that it is very difficult to maintain a positive Indigenous identity in that kind of

The Silence of Our Friends

By Mark Long and Jim Demonakos

Illustrated by Nate Powell

First Second, 2012

Review by Yutaka Dirks

By 1968, the civil rights movement was well underway in cities across the United States. But despite the sustained organizing efforts of black activists and their allies, progress was slow. In the racially divided city of Houston, Texas, black communities continued to face regular violence and institutionalized discrimination. The Ku Klux Klan promoted hate rallies door to door, white children repeated the racist slurs spoken by their elders, and many whites viewed small gestures of cross-racial friendship as unforgivable transgressions.

The Silence of Our Friends by Mark Long, Jim Demonakos, and Nate Powell reflects on a brief moment during those tumultuous times. Mining his childhood memories, Long has written a work of graphic fiction that resonates with the honesty of memoir, refusing to sugar-coat the past.

The story is centred on Long's father, Jack, and his family. While covering a Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee rally as a TV reporter, Jack meets Larry Thompson, a fictional character based on the real-life Larry Thomas, a black anti-poverty activist from Houston's Fifth Ward. They strike up a tentative friendship that eventually brings their families together.

When racist whites run down Larry's daughter, he organizes a community protest. The march is attacked by the police, and in the melee, two officers are shot – one fatally.

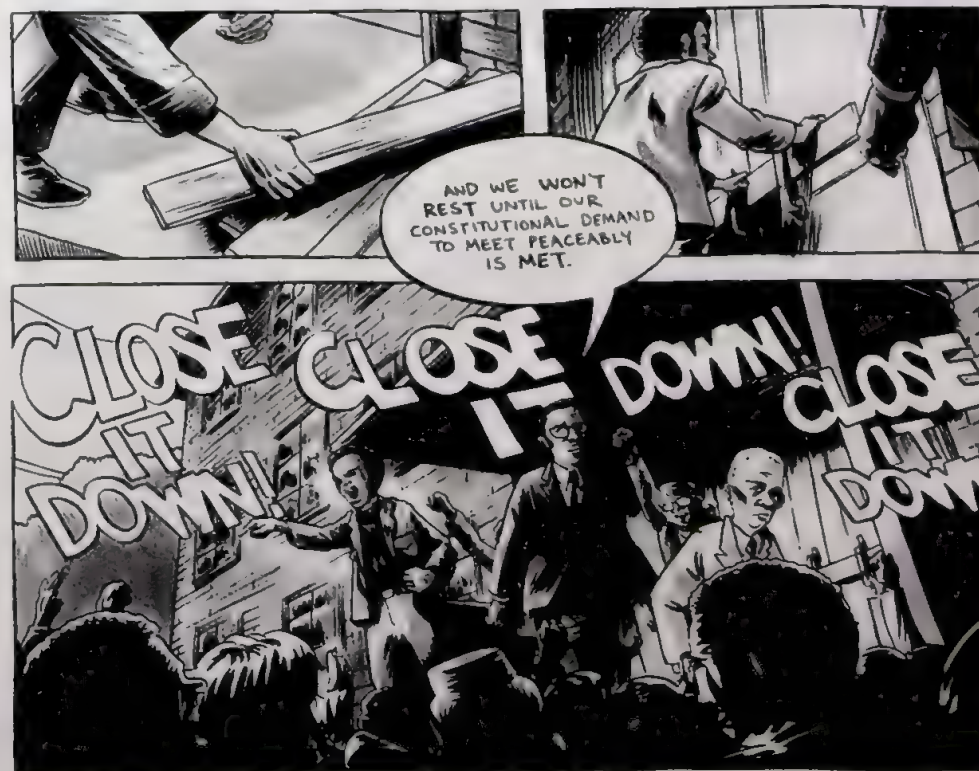
Five black students are charged with manslaughter, and Jack holds key evidence that could save them. Thankfully, Long avoids the racist narrative of a



noble white saviour that plagues many stories set in the same era. Jack falters at several points, and finally, Larry presses Jack to speak the truth.

The visual storytelling of Nate Powell, whose 2008 graphic novel *Swallow Me Whole* won an Eisner Award for Best New Graphic Novel, continues to shine. His pencil work is exuberant, striking

the perfect balance between cartooning and realism. Powell makes brilliant use of a limited grey-scale colour palette and thoughtful layout choices to bring a stunning depth of feeling to the small but revelatory moments in the characters' lives. When Larry lashes out at his son Daniel after being refused service at a white-owned gas station,



Mining his childhood memories, Long has written a work of graphic fiction that resonates with the honesty of memoir, refusing to sugar-coat the past.

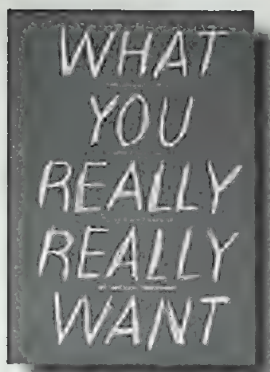


and when Mark Long and his sister Michelle are left out of a game of catch by an epithet-spouting neighbourhood boy, their faces seem to swirl with a storm of emotions moving just beneath their skin.

The book falls short of addressing many of the key political discussions occurring in the movement at the time. Black Power is not adequately explained, and the relationship between racism, imperialism, and capitalism is never considered. The failure of the authors to mention the well-documented FBI COINTELPRO program, which attempted to systematically discredit and destroy black liberation movements, leaves readers lacking the contextual information necessary to understand the police violence and trial.

What *The Silence of Our Friends* does well is ask important questions. How are racist attitudes internalized or rejected by children? What does it take to earn the trust of others across boundary lines marked by race privilege? And, how can we make progress in the struggle against oppression?

The graphic novel ends with what can only be understood as a call to action in the form of a quote by Martin Luther King Jr.: "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." The book's power arises from the disparate and delicate moments in the lives of its characters, woven together like voices in a choir, reminding us that, while never easy, solidarity begins with a refusal to be silent when others are oppressed. **b**



What You Really Really Want

The smart girl's shame-free guide to sex and safety

By Jaclyn Friedman
Seal Press, 2011

Review by Shayna Stock

In the midst of conflicting and ubiquitous messages about women's sexuality, it's no wonder so many young women have a hard time determining and articulating their desires and boundaries when it comes to sex. The challenge of cultivating a healthy, satisfying, and self-directed sex life can feel next to impossible.

What You Really Really Want offers readers not only hope that a healthy sex life is possible but also practical guidance for reclaiming our sexuality. In this resolutely pragmatic, no-nonsense guide, Jaclyn Friedman expertly walks readers through the process of penetrating the layers of influence on our sexuality with the ultimate goal of taking our sex lives into our own hands.

Although written expressly for younger women and girls, the book is a valuable resource for anyone seeking to explore their sexual desires and boundaries, and is actively inclusive of all genders and sexual orientations.

Friedman is the co-editor with Jessica Valenti of the anthology *Yes Means Yes! Visions of Female Sexual Power and a World Without Rape*. After a reporter asked her to explain how we "figure out what we want to say 'yes' to in the first place," she decided to write *What You Really Really Want* to help readers answer this question for themselves.

Beginning with an examination of the impact of family, media, peers, school,

religious institutions, medical professionals, and partners on our sexuality, Friedman encourages readers to first determine where they currently stand when it comes to sex and sexuality before delving into what they want and, finally, how to get it.

The "terrible trio" – shame, blame, and fear – are introduced early on as major barriers to connecting with one's sexuality. Their persistent reappearance throughout the book can feel repetitive at times, but given the pervasiveness of this "triple threat" in society and the depth of its damage, it's hard to, well, *blame* Friedman for their prevalence in the book.

What You Really Really Want reads like a workbook, and Friedman encourages readers to take their time with it (a week or two per chapter, which works out to three to six months). Each chapter includes prompts for written reflection and points readers to lists of additional resources. Friedman brings in her own personal desires, boundaries, and experiences of sexuality only intermittently in order to illustrate her points. The emphasis throughout is on the reader, with Friedman guiding her along with the directness and compassion of an older sister.

Friedman's frank yet intimate approach gives the reader a sense of being guided by competent, caring hands. The book asks a lot of its read-

ers, challenging them to take a great deal of responsibility for their own sexual health and safety, asking them to rehash potentially painful experiences, and coaxing them through difficult but important conversations. Friedman balances this heaviness with friendly reassurances throughout, such as "This chapter may have stirred up uncomfortable memories," and "Life is messy sometimes, and so is sex."

The book falls short in addressing the systemic nature of sexual oppression and advocating for a society that nurtures, even celebrates, female sexuality. Friedman acknowledges that sexuality is socially constructed but only briefly touches on the structural barriers to sexual self-determination. While she guides readers through personal reflections on how systemic prejudices based on age, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation impact the way we experience sexuality as individuals, she stops short of suggesting any collective efforts to address the roots of sexual violence beyond a short section at the end that vaguely encourages us to advocate for a more "holistic, pleasure-based model" of sexual education within our schools.

Nevertheless, *What You Really Really Want* is a powerful tool for radically transforming how we understand and navigate the complexities of our own sexuality. **b**

RED ALERT!

Let's Capture the History of Labour Unions during the Cold War before it's too Late!

The Cold War saw left-led unions isolated, raided, and ultimately defeated. One such union, Mine Mill & Smelter Workers (MMSW), had an active Ladies Auxiliary. These women fed striking families, organized clothing drives, and maintained the social fabric of the union in BC, Alberta, Ontario, and SK. We are conducting a historical study on the MMSW Ladies Auxiliary and want to locate surviving members to interview them about their Auxiliary work in the 1950s - 1960s.



Do you remember the slogan: "A union without the women is only half organized"?

Were You a Member of MMSW Ladies Auxiliary?

If you were involved in the MMSW Ladies Auxiliary, have mothers, sisters, aunts, or grandmothers who were involved, or have any leads that could help us locate these members, please contact us:

Blog: <http://www.elizabethquinlan.ca/blogs/>

Email: mmsw.research_project@hotmail.ca.

Liz Quinlan, University of Saskatchewan & Andrea Quinlan, York University



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QUOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND



On stories

"She didn't read books so she didn't know that she was the world and the heavens boiled down to a drop."

ZORA NEALE HURSTON

"You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or who had ever been alive."

JAMES BALDWIN

"The best books... are those that tell you what you know already."

GEORGE ORWELL

"We write to make sense of it all."

WALLACE STEGNER

"I've found, in my own writing, that a little hatred, keenly directed, is a useful thing."

ALICE WALKER

"Human beings suffer agonies, and their sad fates become legends; poets write verses about them and playwrights compose dramas, and the remembrance of past grief becomes a source of present pleasure - such is the strange alchemy of the spirit."

UPTON SINCLAIR

"The world must be all fucked up,' he said then, 'when men travel first class and literature goes as freight.'"

GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

On poetry

"Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought."

AUDRE LORDE

"Reality trumps all of the poets put together for horror, beauty, and craziness."

EDUARDO GALEANO

Suggestions for Quotes from the Underground are welcome and can be sent to editor@briarpatchmagazine.com

CODE GREEN



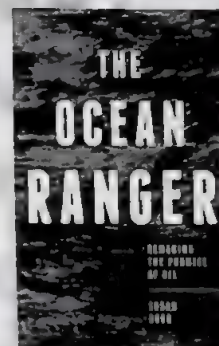
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SUSTAINER PROFILE #14:

Karen McIvor



Deeper Roots: Celebrating *Briarpatch*'s community- supported media campaign!

Facing severe cuts to government funding and a potentially devastating financial crisis, *Briarpatch* launched the Deeper Roots campaign in 2009.

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Educator and naturalist Karen McIvor has been reading Briarpatch for the past seven years. When she's not reading Briarpatch or birdwatching, she's busy politicizing her class of Grade 11 students in a socio-ecological education program called Trek School. Karen lives in Regina with her Grateful Dead-loving partner and her feminist dog, Scout.

How would you describe yourself to *Briarpatch* readers?

I learned how to be a young, white, able-bodied, heterosexual woman at a farm near Watrous, Saskatchewan. I grew up with a United Steelworker dad, a stay-at-home mom, and four unique siblings.

What do you do for fun?

Dance to my favourite local bands. Talk to people who know way more about Saskatchewan than I ever will. Play with my nieces and nephews. Walk on gravel roads with my dog. And spend time laughing with kick-ass people.

What's your favourite book?

Fields of Green: Restorying Culture, Environment, and Education by editors Marcia McKenzie, Paul Hart, Heesoon Bai and Bob Jickling.

What do you see as the most important issue facing Canadians?

Our neoliberal education system is designed for job training rather than a holistic education for love, democracy, justice, and the health of ecosystems.

How would you describe *Briarpatch* to a friend?

(1) What Stephen Harper should be reading; and (2) a must-read magazine that will transform you into a sapiosexual!

Is there anything else you'd like readers to know?

Brown-headed Cowbirds are parasitic nesters.

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Rising above the dark night of prison

By Vernon Wilson

Residing at the Regional Treatment Centre, a federal penitentiary in Abbotsford, B.C., I am reminded daily of my social identity as a prisoner: living in a cell, interacting with prison staff, obeying the institution's rules and routines. After a while, it is easy to fall into the motions of a mundane institutional life where I know myself simply as a number, and prison staff merely as uniforms.

In prison, inmates and staff alike are vulnerable to turning into pathological versions of ourselves.

In here, you're either a prisoner or a guard. Social roles and labels dictate behaviours. That's the power of the prison. Too often I have seen fellow inmates degenerate into passive victims or resentful system bashers. Too often I have seen correctional officers devolve into tyrants or sadists.

The Conservative Party's "tough-on-crime" approach, I believe, supports this pathology. This past year, for example, Minister of Public Safety Vic Toews announced his government would be spending over \$77 million in prison expansion projects in B.C. alone, and little emphasis is being put on rehabilitative programs. This will only increase the overcrowded prison population. As Minister Toews so toughly put it, "public safety first; rehabilitation second."

Under this "transformation agenda," if we can call it that, inmates will be made to feel as though they're warehoused cattle, while prison guards will be required to exercise power over a greater number of inmates. Clearly, in this condition, humans deform into objects.

Contrary to this political approach, I believe the true source of positive and genuine transformation is relational. Transformation occurs in relationships built and maintained between prisoners and their families, friends, volunteers, and staff who are in the system, but not of it.

Transformation occurs when inmates treat each other and staff as people who belong to their own families and are trying their best under the circumstances. It occurs when each of us looks beyond our social roles and labels – be it "con" or "guard" – and respects the person. At the end of the day, when the final cell door shuts and the last count is done, we are all just people temporarily imprisoned.

And let us not forget that every morning we are capable of rising above the dark night of prison. We do this by reaffirming our unique selves and transforming our lives one day at a time, one relationship at a time.

After all, a smile and a respectful attitude are a lot cheaper than super-sized prisons. The latter is costing us billions of dollars. The former will only cost us our biases and prejudices. ❧





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